

WASHINGTON POST

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# 'It Is Time to Strip Away the Dou'

Following is the text of President Nixon's news conference yesterday:

The President: We will go ahead with some questions if you like.

Question: Mr. President, you have said that it is against U.S. policy to bomb the dikes and dams in North Vietnam. Yesterday, the State Department acknowledged there had been incidental and inadvertent damage from the bombing nearby.

My question is: Is it worth the risk of possible flooding and having world opinion turned against us as a result of bombing dams?

A: I think your question would be better answered by my discussing the policy toward bombing of civilian installations of North Vietnam generally, and then coming down to the specifics of your question, in giving a general answer.

Some of you who were in Texas with me will recall that the question was raised on the Connally Ranch, and it was raised, actually, by an advocate of bombing dikes as to why we did not bomb dikes. I said it had been U.S. policy even before the bombing halt of 1968 to bomb the dikes, that it was not our policy now, but it would not be in the future, because it is the policy of the United States in all of its activities in North Vietnam to direct its attacks against military targets only.

That was the policy in the past and it is now the policy which we have had to resume the bombing for the reasons that I mentioned in my speech of May 8.

With regard to the situation

said of this very difficult war, we find that since 1965 there have been 600,000 civilian casualties in South Vietnam as a result of deliberate policies of the North Vietnamese Communists, not accidental, but deliberate.

In North Vietnam, in the period from 1954 to 1970, in their so-called land reform program, a minimum of 50,000 were murdered, assassinated, and according to the Catholic Bishop of Hanoi, whom I talked to when I was there in 1966, in South Vietnam, in addition to the 800,000 refugees who came south, there were at least a half million who died in slave labor camps in North Vietnam.

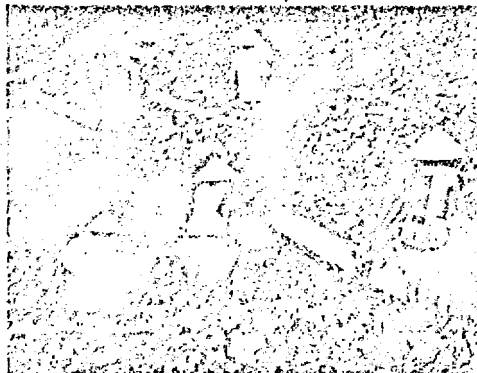
Now, I did not relate this series of incidents for the purpose of saying, because they did something bad, we can do something bad.

What I am simply saying is, let's not have a hypocritical double standard. The United States has been installed, greater restraint than any great power has ever shown in handling this war. We will continue to be restrained. We have no bomb

policy targets in order to accomplish the objectives I have described in my speech of May 8.

On the other hand, as far as their policy of deliberate murder, and assassination, and otherwise attacks on civilians for the purpose of trying to win on this and divert attention from their lack of a coherent political effort, and it is one that I think needs to be answered.

We have to, of course, be responsible for the war we are fighting. It is one that we would



Workers, mostly women, repair a segment of the dike system in North Vietnam. The picture was taken in Ninh Binh Province by Amando Doronilla of the Manila Times.

We will give you what you want in South Vietnam."

Q: Mr. President, to follow up the first question, if I may, there had been reports that SAM missiles or missiles had been used to bomb the dike system. Is that correct?

A: I have seen those reports, Mr. Liaison. As you know, the Secretary of Defense has made some involved comments about it. The situation there is one that we would

of the most barbaric injustices. In history, and founded by a violation of all concepts of international law in handling the prisoners of war. For those with their policy of deliberate murder, and assassination, and otherwise attacks on civilians for the purpose of trying to win on this and divert attention from their lack of a coherent political effort, and it is one that I think needs to be answered.

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when you put yourself in the position of the enemy, and they hear that the Congress of the United States says, in effect, "We will give you what you want regardless of what the President has offered" why not wait? This is the problem, and I would hope that as leaders and consciences consult their consciences, they would realize that we have lost three months left before the election. In those three months we hope to do everything we can to bring this war to a halt, and they

ing out to see a picture that according to the caption, and I will for his figure, I hope in this office, and have never an appointment to health.

Considering we been through, we stern crises and, I think that in your question, it for that will have subject that will and in which the each of them, we make his own decision mine. I don't that others should wise.

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Reaction President

Q. Mr. President, to

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So, I would

the taking a picture which

graph as it was taken from The Post files was a caption that read:

"DIRT POWER. In the Red River Delta which encompasses 11 of North Vietnam's 30 provinces and produces most of the country's rice, an intricate dike system keeps the water level in the river under control during the monsoon season of July-September. Dike repair has a high value in the scheme of war, with every household in the Delta keeping slabs of earth on reserve for use by dike brigades in event of attack. This scene in the village of Gia Ninh, Ninh Binh Province, shows workers, mostly women, repairing a dike recently bombed by planes ... AP News Features Photo ... 11/14/67."

THE DATE of the picture was clear. Leaving it out left the implication that bombs recently had been dropped on North Vietnamese dikes and if one were so disposed could also have implied that the President was lying. Leaving out the date also omitted another important fact, that some dikes had been hit by American bombs for years and this had become a standard fear of the North Vietnamese.

The omission of the date appears to have been the result of haste, impelled by rushed deadlines. A relatively inexperienced copy editor on the National Desk of The Post was writing caption material as the 7:30 deadline for the first edition fell, and his task was taken over by a senior editor. In the passage

## Some Pictures Need Words

By Ben H. Bagdikian

Continued

THERE is a fake proverb by "Confucius" that "One picture is worth a thousand words," an axiom that is to photographers what the Declaration of Independence was to Thomas Paine.

Although the "Confucian" saying is not genuine, photographs do have a power of their own. Unlike words, which are intellectual abstractions invented and translated by some human operative, photographs imply unvarnished reality. How can you doubt a photograph? Or the television screen? It's right there, recorded by an opinionless machine.

But, of course, pictures can lie, the same way the eye-brain can lie. They can look the other way. I once heard a witness in a murder case who had been sitting on a bar stool next to a man while a hit man was putting six bullets into the victim, testify, "I didn't see nothing. I was lighting a cigarette at the time."

On Friday, July 28, The Washington Post carried a photograph that seemed to say one thing but really didn't about the current controversy over whether the United States is systematically bombing the dike system of North Vietnam.

IT IS NOT a trivial controversy. The Red River dikes keep millions of North Vietnamese from drowning. There are sections of Hanoi, for example, protected only by dikes. If major dams and dikes were to collapse dur-

ing rainy season it would be a genuine catastrophe with possible deaths in the millions. It was the building of the dike system 2000 years ago that welded the Vietnamese people into a culture distinct and separate from their neighbors.

The North Vietnamese and others claim that the United States is now bombing the system either to make it break down now, or later when the heaviest monsoon rains come. Some neutral observers have said they have seen bomb damage among the dikes.

The United States officially has denied any such bombing program and President Nixon at his July 27 press conference repeated this denial. The next day, The Post's lead story reported the President's denial and on Page A10 carried the verbatim text of his press conference under an eight-column headline.

But at the top of the page The Post ran a three-column photograph from The Associated Press showing some people working on what appears to be a rubble-strewn surface. The full caption read:

"Workers, mostly women, repair a segment of the dike system in North Vietnam. The picture was taken in Ninh Binh Province by Amando Doronilla of the Manila Times."

That was all. It was a commendable attempt to give some background for the photograph and explain to readers how a North Vietnamese dike system works. But it left out the most crucial piece of information. The photograph was taken five years ago.